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SYMPATHY IN THE PREACHER AS AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY.

"Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."—HEB. 5: 2.

THERE is an analogy, sufficiently obvious though it may be remote, between the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation and the Christian ministry. The Christian minister does not indeed offer unto God gifts and sacrifices for sins. The Christian Church has but one Priest: the "great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," who, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God," and there "ever liveth to make intercession for them who come unto God by him." Yet, like the Jewish high priest and some of his assistants, the ministers of the gospel do bear an official relation, at the same time to God, and to the people; do conduct the public ceremonies of religion in behalf of the people, and in a certain subordinate sense are the organs of communication between God and men. The analogy is not sufficient to throw over upon the Christian ministry the peculiar sanctity and divine authority of the priesthood, by which the Jewish high priest was separated from the people, and elevated above them, and put in authority over them; but it is sufficient to justify us in finding in the requirements which God made of the priesthood, instruction as to the required character and conduct of the Christian ministry. Those requirements were of two classes: one relating to things physical, the other, to things of a moral nature. The *physical* qualifications demanded of the priesthood may perhaps all be regarded as emblematic of analogous moral qualifications which

should be found in the minister of the gospel ; while the requirements pertaining to *moral* qualifications are equally applicable to both. One of these is brought to our notice in the text. It is asserted that in ordaining men to the priesthood to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin, God had in view the existence and exercise of a becoming *sympathy for the people*. He expected the high priest to have kind feelings toward the erring and guilty men for whom he was officiating, because he himself was a fallible and guilty creature. He was to "have compassion" on them—to treat them with gentleness and kindness, because of a deep sympathy with them arising from his own weakness and liability to sin. Holding to them the relation of God's representative, conveying to them God's counsels, appearing in their behalf before the Holy Presence in the sanctuary, reproofing and rebuking them for sin,—he was yet to remember that he was a man—a man of like passions with themselves, " compassed also with infirmity."

And now we scarcely need the analogy which subsists between them in their official relations, to justify the application of this requirement of the Jewish high priest to the Christian minister. For if any man need to remember that he also is a *man*, compassed with infirmity, surely it is he who speaks to his dying fellow-men those momentous truths which take hold upon eternity. If any man may be expected to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, surely it is he who has by wondrous grace been reclaimed from sin, and called to preach the way of salvation to the lost. I am justified, therefore, in using the text for the purpose of inculcating such a lesson on my brethren in the ministry and on myself. And keeping in view the great end for which God himself has instituted the ministry, and so viewing the minister as seeking most successfully to attain that end, I may go beyond the course of conduct enjoined in the expression " having compassion," which in its fulness means, *treating with moderation and kindness*, to the great *principle* involved in it, and suggested by the final clause, " for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity ;" and using the word *sympathy* to cover the whole of the injunction in spirit and in practice, I announce as the subject to which I would now invite your attention,

SYMPATHY IN THE PREACHER AS AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS
IN THE MINISTRY.

1. *The preacher must enter into the feelings and circumstances of his audience in order rightly to adapt to them the truth which he preaches.* There is, indeed, a general adaptation in all truth to the condition and wants of men. All religious truth is valuable. The main teachings of the Christian religion are always in place, always appropriate, and always weighty in instruction and in-

fluence. There are prominent features of human nature common to all men. There is something in the hearts of all which is responsive to the voice of divine Revelation; and he who touches before any number of men any note of the sacred harp will not fail to awaken some tone of unison in the harp of thousand strings in man. No word caught from the lips of Inspiration can be useless, or uttered in vain to any of the sons of men. It can never be amiss for the preacher to hold up before his audience the great fact which constitutes the glory and preciousness of the gospel, and, appealing powerfully to their consciences to convince them of guilt, to point them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

But it must also be borne in mind, that every truth is not equally appropriate, and equally potent for good, under all circumstances. Human nature, though the same in general, is diverse in particulars. One note of the divine harp is not adapted to all the varying shades of character in man. It is strung and tuned by the Almighty Parent so as to send forth an almost endless variety of sounds, from the gentlest, most subduing tone of love, to the deepest, loudest thunder of retributive justice; and he who harps ever on one string to man, sinful, sorrowing, tempted, triumphing, will fail to do justice to the harmony of the gospel message, and fail to do good to his fellow-men. In other words, the preacher must discriminate between the different classes of hearers, and between the different states of mind in which the hearers may be at different times, and must learn how to adapt the specific truth to the specific circumstances. He must know when to convince the judgment; when to establish his hearers in the faith; when to rebuke; when to warn; when to instruct; when to comfort; when to encourage. What the work of the ministry demands is not the mere abstract preaching of general truths; not simply the philosophy of religion. But the truths of Christianity must be set home to the hearts of men each in its proper place and time. And men are not merely to be viewed in the abstract, as sinners or as Christians, but are to be regarded in their various characters and various wants, in *classes* almost innumerable, yet having some common peculiarity of favor or of need, and *individually*, each having some special claim to regard; and the preaching must be to human nature in general, and to human nature in its classes of men, and to human nature individually. "On some the preacher is to have compassion, making a difference, and others he is to save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." To this variety of special purposes, all harmonizing in the one great purpose of securing a perfect redemption, and to this great variety in human nature, the teachings of the Bible, as already intimated, are admirably adapted; and the great truths which are to be the means for accomplishing the benevolent design of God, are presented in endless diversity of form: not abstract

and philosophic, but concrete, embodied in figure and parable and living form, so as to reach the heart, and win it to holiness. And the preacher discriminating in the manner mentioned is but imitating the divine method, and carrying out the spirit of the gospel, while he is thus "rightly dividing the word of truth," and as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God giving to every man his portion in due season.

Now, in order to secure most fully this adaptedness in preaching, something more is necessary than an acquaintance with the general features and facts of human nature. The two great comprehensive truths: man, as a fallen being, needs a Saviour; the gospel proclaims a Saviour adapted to man's need;—these must not only be regarded in this abstract manner, but they must be taken into the preacher's own heart, and thought over and felt there, and have their richness of meaning wrung out by him in his own experience, and be turned over and over by him, until he learns to be familiar with their myriad phases. He must look out upon the world, and see not only immortal beings in sin, pressing onward to the grave and the judgment; but noting well the workings of his own heart, and observing closely the conduct of his fellow-men, he must form some correct idea of the mighty struggle of the soul. He must learn where the burden presses, and bring from God's Word a power to lighten it. He must understand the strength of temptation, the bondage of sinful habit, the multiform influence of the world; and he must know how to furnish to the soul an armor by which it may ward off the darts of the adversary; must assist it in resisting temptation, in breaking the fetters of sinful habits, in disentangling itself from the meshes of sin, and the embrace of the world. He must know how to make allowance for the peculiar difficulties which beset various classes of men. He must look at men and things as they are; practically, and as a man. He must feel as a man, and with all a man's feelings, and enriched by study, he must bring forward from the treasury of divine truth things for man as he is, just suited to each man's case: for the young and the old, the poor and the rich, the doubting, the feeble-minded, the ignorant, the scornful, the negligent, the careless, the awakened, the inquiring, the penitent, the meek, the humble, the sorrowful, the rejoicing. And he cannot do this unless he sympathizes with human nature; unless he enters into the feelings of his hearers. He cannot do it, if he holds himself aloof from them and above them, as a being of a different order, charged simply with messages from God to man—to man, of whom he cares to know nothing more than that he is man. Not for this purpose was man chosen to be God's ambassador to man. Not for such a purpose did the Deity become incarnate: but that man as a brother, sympathizing with a brother's condition, might address unto him the appropriate truth; that for man there might ever

be a priest, the great High Priest in heaven and his ministers on earth, "touched with the feeling of his infirmities," and so capable of speaking to his conscience and his heart. He cannot do this, if he be a mere theologian dealing in theory. He must draw largely on his own heart for knowledge. He must learn the avenues to the hearts of others. He must know how men feel, and how to appreciate their various trials, in order most successfully to adapt to them the truth. It is to be feared that there is preaching which grates upon the soul, and chills the struggling heart, because it comes to men with cold abstraction rather than appropriate truth ; preaching that gives to the hungering soul a stone when it is asking for bread. There are doubts in many an inquiring mind, tending towards infidelity ; there are difficulties of peculiar temperament, or peculiar business engagements, or peculiar domestic trials, which keep the soul from acknowledging Christ Jesus, and taking part with his people ; and it will not do, it is often cruel, to meet these with the bare assertion, however true, that the heart is not right, that these doubts and hesitations and delays are wicked and dangerous. This is not the whole truth adapted to the case. But let the preacher with a sympathizing heart enter into these circumstances and appreciate their influence, and then with his better knowledge, and from the higher position to which the grace of God has led him, let him seek out right words to meet the exigency. Let him select divine truth adapted to the peculiar circumstances, and present this to his hearers, that he may dissipate their doubts, and help them in spite of all opposing obstacles, however peculiar and however great, to become the disciples of Christ.

2. *Such sympathy is requisite to enable the preacher to address his audience in a proper tone and spirit.* It is demanded not only that the appropriate truth be selected, but also that it be appropriately presented. The manner in which an act is done is sometimes of equal influence with the act itself. Solemn and appropriate truths may be so addressed to the hearers as to be deprived of their due effect upon them. And here I refer not so much to the *style* of the preaching, in its relation to the *intellectual* condition of the hearers, as to the *general spirit* of the discourse, and to those indescribable evidences of the speaker's feeling, which reside combined in his words, his cast of thought, his tones, his gesture.

The minister who dwells much in his contemplation on the heinousness and enormity of sin, as committed against a God of infinite holiness and benevolence, and upon the hardness of the heart, the perverseness of the will in man, is liable perhaps to assume a tone of severity and of censure in his preaching. The position which he occupies as God's ambassador bearing messages founded on immutable truth, addressing rebels, and asserting the rights of his Sovereign, and calling them to re-

penitance and submission, may give to him a tone of authority and rebuke. His own deep feeling and jealousy for God's honor may sometimes impart something of indignation to his address. But a little reflection will show that every thing like harshness, or assumed authority, or angry rebuke, is foreign to the spirit which should animate him in his ministrations. His own sense of sin, his experience of the infirmities with which he is encompassed, should teach him to speak with compassion, and a heart yearning with deep sympathy, to his fellow-man. "I also am a man," should be his feeling as he stands in God's name before them.

"I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other?"

"I also am compassed with infirmity, and therefore will I be compassionate to them that are ignorant and out of the way." And deeply realizing this, he will be

"affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty man."

Indeed, he who contemplates the *misery* of sin, who looks at the children of men not only as guilty, but also as wretched, must be moved with compassion for them, and have his tone softened and his manner filled with kindness. I would not be misunderstood as overlooking the great fact that man has a wicked heart, that he is a guilty rebel, that an appeal must be made to his conscience, that sometimes the wrath of the offended law must be made to roll its thunders over his soul, and the plain austere language of Divine Justice must be spoken directly to him. I should be sorry to be supposed to countenance that false philosophy, more correctly a mawkish and selfish sentimentality, which overlooks the claims of God, the demands of holiness, in sympathy for the offender. But whilst I would ever maintain the majesty of the Divine Law, and be jealous for the honor of God, I would always address man as a brother, guilty, and to be pitied because he is guilty. If I must be severe, I would never be harsh. I would ever speak the truth in love. And when I use the awful terrors of the Scripture, charge home upon him his guilt, and hold up to his view in all its deformity his heart at enmity with God, I would do it with my own heart melting into pity for his miserable state, and longing for his redemption; and in such a way as to show him that what is spoken is of God, and not of man,—is immutable truth, and conveyed to him by a brother's lips that it may affect his heart. I would let him see, and make him feel, that my

spirit is not, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou!" but "Come thou, with me, dear fellow-man, to the fountain that has cleansed my own soul." I would give him no occasion to feel that he is regarded as an outcast, lawless, and not to be loved; but would rather address him as a wanderer whom Love seeks to bring back to the paternal home. I would not let him regard me as a stranger speaking to him merely officially, or professionally, but as one who knows what is in man, who has flesh in his heart, and is of like passions with himself, and is touched by the feeling of his infirmities. I would thus regard myself as occupying, in a certain sense, the place of mediation between man and Christ; and whilst deeply feeling on the one hand my responsibility to my Lord, and anxious to maintain his honor, I would also feel deeply for my fellow-sinner. While conscious that he must be made to feel his guilt in order to secure his salvation, I would also remember that his condition is most pitiable, and seek by kindness to win him to repentance.

But the sympathy, or compassion of the preacher must not only be of this general nature: it must enter into particulars. And herein do I regard it as especially important. As already remarked, there is a great diversity in the characters and circumstances of men; and the preacher must learn to understand this diversity, to perceive the different shades of character, to appreciate the various influences which bear upon men. There may be harm done by sweeping, indiscriminate charges made against men. We must remember that we are speaking the most awful sentences that lips can utter, when we are charging upon men guilt against God, and telling them that everlasting misery is their doom. And we must remember what anguish our words may be fixing in the soul, or what scorn and hate they may be exciting. We must remember that what we say sweeps over the many hearts before us as a cheering, refreshing breeze, or as a desolating tornado, tearing and heaving the soul, or else as a cold north wind that chills and blesses not. Let me endeavor to illustrate my meaning. We sometimes hear wholesale denunciations of certain classes of men, without making any allowances for any peculiar circumstances. With some preachers it seems to be enough for every case to say, *Your heart is all wrong*; as if that alone were sufficient to make the *heart right*. With others it suffices to make the distinction between Christians and men of the world, and to look at men only in these classes, and to use the same language towards all who are not Christians. Now one who knows men, and truly sympathizes with them, will not do this. He will know that in the vast class which "the world" comprises, there are some struggling towards the light, some manfully striving against doubts and various temptations, some moral and unblamable in life, some "not far from the kingdom of heaven;" and entering into their various circumstances, he will address them with

appropriate thoughts, and appropriate tones of tenderness. All *infidels* are not to be regarded as abandoned men. That a man has *doubts* is no evidence of a hopeless depravity. And yet how little sympathy is often entertained for such men! And how are they met with charges of dishonesty, and told simply and sternly, that they have wicked hearts! And how often may their hearts be steeled in wickedness, because they find not the sympathy and aid which their souls are almost breaking to receive! Here are men engaged in business; their duties occupying them from morn till night, their minds necessarily filled with thoughts of their worldly occupations: now shall the minister overlook their peculiar circumstances, make no allowance for their difficulties, and show no sympathy with them when urging on them their duty? Take the young; and forget the feelings of your youth, its joys and its sorrows, its temptations and its trials, when you are speaking to them; and will you do them good? Will you demand of them the heart and mind of advanced life? So there are domestic cares and trials, and the thousand little things of daily life which try the temper and test the obedience of Christians, and form the obstacles of the impenitent. All those the preacher should have in view, and his heart should go out kindly to the heart of his brother man. And so I might go on with countless illustrations to show in what direction this sympathy should be exercised. Just think of it for a moment. The merchant has his trials, and the farmer his; the clerk, the servant, the employer, the mechanic, the husband, the wife, the parent, the child, the man in authority, the man of the world, the rich man, the poor man, the scholar, the man of science, the physician, the lawyer, the church member, the amiable, the passionate, the high-tempered, the meek, the vain,—each has his peculiar difficulties. And what I mean is, that the preacher should not only have sympathy with human nature in general, but should endeavor, as far as possible, to enter into the particular circumstances of each, and treat them all with that moderation and kindness which their case demands.

Again I say, let me not be misunderstood as regarding sin merely as a disease under which our race is suffering. I would have the preacher ever bear in mind that it is a voluntary thing, a state of heart and life for which the sinner is himself responsible, and for which he must suffer if not delivered from it; and would have him plainly and forcibly as possible set forth the depravity of the heart and the claims of the Law. But I hold that he should also have due regard to the various phases which sin, viewed as a moral disease, does assume, and administer his remedies with the kindness of a physician, who understands the sufferings of his patient, and sympathizes with him.

And this should be so, in order to secure the highest measure of success in the ministry. For as preaching which is indis-

criminate in its use of subjects, dealing simply in general truths without selecting such as are adapted to the particular case in hand,—as such preaching, wanting directness, will be comparatively ineffectual, so he who fails to show in his manner of preaching that he has a man's heart and truly sympathizes with his fellow-men, will fail to exercise over them the highest degree of influence, and to attain to the most complete success. There is power in sympathy to affect the soul. Denunciation, indiscriminate censure, sweeping charges, are repulsive to the heart and bar it even against the truth. Sympathy wins the soul. Men listen kindly to one who speaks kindly to them; and when they see that he understands their case and feels for them, they give him their hearts. The voice of coldness, of arrogance, of haughty censoriousness, falls heavily upon them, and they will cast it back if possible; but when the tones are full-freighted with the kind affection of a sympathizing heart, they melt and subdue, and are suffered to make for themselves a way into the soul, and there to apply the needed truth. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Let the people realize that the preacher feels for them, and seeks to meet their wants, and the sternest, most repulsive, most fearful truths of the Divine Word may fall from his lips and sink into their hearts.

3. *Sympathy contributes to that earnestness which is a prime element of Pulpit Eloquence.* Earnestness connected with valuable thought is power. It always affects the soul of the hearer. The earnest preacher, other things being equal, is the effective preacher. But no man can speak earnestly who does not feel deeply. The heart is the fountain of eloquence. He only speaks "as a dying man to dying men," who knows how to "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Sympathy with human nature, a deep conviction of the danger and misery of mankind, an appreciation of their true condition, and a longing desire for their deliverance and salvation,—this alone, together with a right regard for God, can produce the eloquence that is worthy of the pulpit; this alone can infuse earnestness, warmth, animation, affectionate appeal, direct address, strokes powerful, unswerving, carrying truth right home to the heart, into the discourses of the preacher; this alone can enkindle on the preacher's heart that fire, and send forth from his lips those burning thoughts which enkindle a fire in the soul of the hearers. This is the true Promethean energy, which, catching the spark of celestial origin, "creates a soul beneath the ribs of death." This by itself cannot give to the preacher all the graces of oratory; but it can give that which is worth far more than those graces, and without which all mere gracefulness of style and utterance will be but as sounding brass and a tink-

ling cymbal. It can give the beauty of Love, and the grandeur of Power, in the outgushing emotion of a sympathizing heart. And therefore let the preacher who would be successful in the ministration of the pulpit cultivate such sympathy; not only having his heart beating responsive to "the great heart of humanity," but striving also to feel for the peculiar circumstances of those whom he addresses, so that each may find in him a brother.

Let me in the fourth and last place call your attention,

4. To the fact, *that such sympathy has characterized those who have been most successful in the ministry, and whom we may regard as models worthy of our imitation.* Here it will at once be admitted by those who hear me, that the ministers who have most truly felt for souls, been most anxious that men should be saved, have also been the most earnest in their preaching, and the most successful in their ministry. It is needless to cite names which will readily occur to most of my hearers. Now their very earnestness is evidence of their deep sympathy with their fellow-men; while throughout their sermons and writings you will find expressions showing the ever-present consciousness of their being compassed with infirmity, and this causing them to have compassion on their erring and guilty fellow-men. It would be easy to quote passages from Latimer, and Howe, and Baxter, and Doddridge, and Edwards, and many others, of olden and of modern date, confirming this statement. It is true that some of them dealt largely in the thunders of the violated law. Sometimes they spoke like some of the ancient prophets, who, in the midst of the corruption and apostasy of Israel, were very jealous for the Lord of Hosts; and the great distinctive features of the gospel, however distasteful to man because humbling to his pride, were ever held forth prominently by them. Still you can see the vein of sympathy running through it all, and giving it the coloring of humanity. You will find moreover the discriminating sympathy of which I have especially spoken. They sought to adapt the truth to every shade of character, and properly to consider all the circumstances of their hearers. They saw and acknowledged the difficulties which were in men's way, and then sought to help them to surmount those difficulties, and to come to Christ notwithstanding them. They never excused sin; they never confounded sin with misfortune; they never allowed their hearers to suppose that they were simply unhappy and not guilty; they never obscured the plain truths of Christianity: but still they spoke in love, and with strong crying and tears, besought men to be reconciled to God. Take, for instance, President Edwards's sermon, entitled "The Sinner in the hands of an angry God," so terrible in its subject, and productive of so great results; and you will find unmistakable evidence of a heart yearning with compassion for those sinners, and not a little of that discriminating sympathy which we are contemplat-

ing. Edwards, we know, was by no means a preacher who dealt only in the gentler features of the gospel; he never yielded any thing to the indulgence of unsanctified human affections. And yet he ever felt most deeply for sinners, and longed for their salvation, and showed sympathy with men in their several trials. The pages of Baxter, who was burning with zeal to snatch sinners as brands from the burning, show how he understood the various phases of human character, how he sympathized with men, and with wonderful readiness adapted himself to the great diversity of human nature, while ever holding fast the cardinal truth of Christianity, and directing all to the promotion of God's glory. We have but to read his "Reformed Pastor," to be satisfied of this. But it will not do for me to dwell on such individual cases, lest I weary your patience. Let us go to the preachers and writers of the New Testament; and while the sympathy which I am commanding is found in them all, fix your eye on its bright shining in the apostle Paul—in Paul, whose epistles contain those very things which are most severe and most offensive to unconverted men. Mark how he has a word of warning, of counsel, of encouragement, for every class of mankind; and how he never forgets throughout that he is a man; how "at Ephesus for the space of three years he ceased not to warn every one day and night with tears;" how he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. See how careful he always was to attribute to every man that which might be said in his favor—to admit his peculiar trial, and then to suit his address to the peculiarity of the case; how truly he was "a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Paul never excused nor palliated sin. He plainly told men of their guilt, and had a stern rebuke and fearful threatening for the obstinately wicked. But no one can carefully read his Epistles, and the record of his ministry in the Book of Acts, without feeling that he had "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way, because that he also was compassed with infirmity."

But we go higher still; and taking the gospel itself as our model, how do we find it every where, along with deep abhorrence and reprehension of sin, breathing the sweetest compassion for men, and, what is more to our purpose, adapting itself with loving-kindness to all the varied wants and woes of man! How humane is its spirit! How beautiful and grand the sympathy of Divinity with humanity which it reveals!

And then directing our attention to Him who came to preach glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, how does this sweet precious sympathy appear in all his earthly ministry! Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity; but ever did he speak sweet-voiced words to the sorrowing children of men. The proud, the hypocritical, the obstinately rebellious he did sternly rebuke; but how did he move among

the mass of men, guilty and polluted as they were, with words and tones of tenderness and kind entreaty, and a conduct that plainly told he was their friend! How with infinite variety and richness did he adapt his teachings to their condition, and thus seek to win them to himself! Nay, is not this now the precious characteristic of Jesus, that he sympathizes with us, with each of us? He was "made like unto his brethren," even us, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted," so that he can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is needless to adduce particulars to show what was the character of our Saviour's ministry. Yet if I were to select a passage which would at the same time exhibit and symbolize the spirit of kindness which characterized him, and which should be found in all his servants, I would direct your attention to the parable of the Prodigal Son. In this, while he administers a rebuke to the uncharitable and self-righteous moralist, he shows a compassion for the sinner worthy of the Divine nature. And we, my brethren, may study that parable as a lesson for us in our preaching. I would not, for the world, have in my heart the spirit of the older brother who had no feeling for the wanderer; and I pray that all my brethren in the ministry, with myself, may have mercy for the erring, tears of compassion for his guilt and danger, and tears of rejoicing when he comes a penitent to God.

I have thus very imperfectly, and yet not so briefly as I wished, set before you a subject which I cannot but regard as of vast significance, and having a vital connection with our efficiency in the ministry of the gospel. Into the *philosophy* of sympathy it has not fallen within my purpose to inquire. I have aimed to deal only with acknowledged facts and principles in their practical bearing. I have endeavored to guard against all misapprehension, while advocating the cultivation in a high degree of such a sympathy with our fellow-men.

And now, in conclusion, let me ask your attention to some of the *reflections* which the subject awakens.

1. *It awakens admiration of God's wisdom and goodness in the establishment of the Christian Ministry.* We can see in the light of this subject that there was wisdom in the appointment of "the foolishness of preaching," as the means of saving them that believe. God knew what was in man. He knew well the avenues to the human heart. He knew all the power of sympathy; and he graciously adapted his instrumentalities to the accomplishment of his benevolent object. All through the scheme of salvation, and of God's intercourse with our fallen race, runs this principle. It is the Incarnate Word, that is to

win the soul of man and lead him back to God. It is truth going forth from a human heart through human lips, that is to be powerful unto salvation. And while this adaptedness in the Christian system to the wants of man confirms our confidence in its divine origin, it leads us to admire the wisdom and the condescending goodness of God ; of God clothing the divine in the human, that he might according to the laws of humanity raise up fallen men to the divine ; of God making himself Emmanuel, and in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; of God making us fellow-workers with himself in a work which angels cannot do.

2. *Our subject suggests the importance of giving as much attention as possible in our ministerial studies to the realities of practical life.* I know very well that great principles are always influential ; that it is a matter of great moment to be able to rise above the tangible and contemplate the ideal ; to grasp those generalizations which comprehend whole systems, a universe of thought covering all the details of truth and life. But I hold it of greater moment to be able to present those truths in such a form as to meet the actual condition of men ; for one to live in this sublime atmosphere of mighty principles, and yet so to mingle with men as to infuse into them the spirit which animates him, to adapt his thoughts to their wants, and by meeting them when they can be met, to raise them up to think and feel and act aright. And this cannot be done by one who contemplates not man as he is ; not simply man at large, in general, but men in all their ignorance, error, infirmity, in all their strength for evil or for good.

I know very well, also, that the careful study of the Bible, and of his own heart, will give to the minister a knowledge of human nature of inestimable importance to his ministry, even though he scarcely go beyond the limits of his study and his pulpit. I reverence the men who can and do come forth from their retirement, simple, untrained in the world's ways, and ignorant of a multitude of things familiar to their hearers, yet laden with rich truths, and uttering sentences to which every heart responds, because based on principles common to man. Such a power is great, and highly worthy of regard. Still our age and our world demand this, and also something more. This should never be sacrificed, but the other should be added to it—the knowledge of practical life, an acquaintance with men and things as they exist and move around us. The conjunction of the two is altogether possible, and forms the great man and the effective preacher.

Necessarily, in their course of preparation for the ministry, our young men are to some degree secluded from the world ; necessarily, our ministers are confined for a large portion of their time to the study : yet observation teaches the importance of securing as much of such practical knowledge as possible,

in legitimate ways. The opportunities afforded of spending leisure weeks or months in the active employment of some of our benevolent institutions, have proved of great benefit to many of our candidates for the ministry, by bringing them into contact with various characters, and teaching them how men, under the various circumstances of life, think and feel with reference to religion. And it may be remarked, in this connection, that the practicalness and efficiency for which the American Pulpit is distinguished, may be traced to the fact that here the minister is regarded, and regards himself so much as one of the people, not belonging to a separate class having no common sympathies with them; and also, and greatly to this kindred fact, worthy of careful notice, that so many of our ministers, instead of being simply a student race brought up amid books in cloistered halls, have been called from active operation in some other part of the field of life to the ministerial work, or through the stern impenitence of poverty have been compelled to *work* their way to the pulpit, thus being brought by experience to the acquisition of a knowledge which no books could furnish. I repeat the thought, the minister who would be effective must remember that he is a man, and that nothing that belongs to a man is foreign to him.

3. *Our subject suggests the importance of the pastoral relation, and of the right discharge of pastoral duties.* I can do little more than barely allude to this, though perhaps the most significant suggestion of our subject. It is in the cultivation of such sympathy between the preacher and the people that the chief value of the pastoral relation is found. The faithful pastor is brought directly into contact with men of various characters, and in various circumstances. There is no such relation as that which subsists between him and his affectionate people; scarcely any so intimate and confidential. He has access to their homes and hearts; he is their friend. And if he rightly conducts himself in his appropriate sphere, he is made a partaker of their joys and their sorrows; he becomes acquainted with all their peculiar and diversified circumstances, learns where the burden presses, in what shape temptation to sin most frequently assails them, and is most likely to be successful; knows when the heart is softened, or when it is hard and stern, and possessed by angry passions. Going from house to house as a friend and a father, or as a loving brother, his heart is touched, and he may go back to his study, and come thence to his pulpit with things new and old adapted to their wants, and with a loving heart and a brother's voice he may speak to them that which will do them good. It is his privilege, as it is his duty, to lead them beside still waters, to make them lie down in green pastures, to supply them with the appropriate food and care; and to do this, he must be acquainted with their wants.

Fidelity in pastoral duty, I am well assured, in connection

with other faithfulness, will add greatly to the richness, the appropriateness, the practical value and efficiency of the pulpit discourses. And while the minister must ever regard the pulpit as "his throne," and on no account neglect preparation for it, he will be greatly aided in his performance there by proper intercourse with the people of his charge. I know the opinions of those who would be strenuous to maintain a dignified reserve on the part of the minister, who would draw broadly the distinction between the Clergy and the Laity, and assert something of peculiar sanctity and mysterious awe in the character of the minister, as giving more force to what he says; who would throw the garb of mystery around the Christian priesthood as likely to impress men: but depend upon it, it is the man who is known as the sympathizing friend, who will most truly command the hearts of those who stately hear him. He greatly errs who neglects to cultivate, by the right discharge of pastoral duty, that acquaintance and sympathy with men, which the pastoral relation was undoubtedly designed, and is so eminently adapted to produce; while it will obviously be greatly for the advantage of every congregation to secure the services of an affectionate and faithful pastor, and by the performance of their reciprocal duties, by treating him as a brother or a father, by opening to him their hearts, unbosoming their cares, and cheering him by a participation in their joys, to keep alive his sympathy with them, and help him to be unto them an able minister of the gospel of grace.

SERMON DXLVI.

BY REV. R. E. PATTISON, PROF. IN NEWTON THEO. INSTITUTE.

THE SPIRIT RETURNING TO GOD.

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—ECCLES. 12: 7.

IN death man is the subject of a great change. It is not simply the change which these bodies experience; these frames dissolving and returning to the dust whence they were taken. Nor is it merely an exchange of worlds, the passing from one class of associates to another; to be met and to be treated on the principles which govern men in their intercourse in this life. The change effected by death is something more than a severing of those ties which bind men together in their present relations. Though through death we are to preserve our identity, and shall ever after that event be the same persons as have here lived and

acted, have enjoyed and suffered, have obeyed or sinned, the *mode* of our existence and action will unquestionably be very different. Though after the resurrection we shall have bodies, and therefore a suitable habitation, yet they will be spiritual bodies. This term may not express any specific idea as to their nature, still it does deny to our future bodies the usual properties and accidents of matter, to which they are now subject. They will be altogether unlike our present bodies as to their nature, and hence equally so in their relations to other beings.

Of nothing have we more satisfactory evidence, either from reason or from Revelation, than that both the mode of existence and the manner of action of body and soul in a future state will differ in many and important points from what they are in the present. As to the body we can form no very definite anticipations. Nor is it necessary that we should, farther than the assurance that it will be united to the spirit which it is to clothe. As to the spirit's mode of action, though ignorant of much, we are sufficiently informed to enable us to prepare for our eternal state. No reflecting mind can for a moment doubt that the soul, at death, will enter upon a wider range of knowledge and action than is opened to it in this life.

But whatever other changes we may be the subjects of at death, by none can we be affected so seriously as by the change *in the manner of knowing God*. We shall have an intimate acquaintance with God, such as we have not in this life. We shall not only have a more perfect, a more distinct and comprehensive knowledge of Jehovah, but my text intimates that the manner of knowing him will be more direct. "The spirit shall return to God who gave it." This is language adapted to our present conceptions and capacities. As if the reason why we see and feel no more the presence of the Deity is because we are removed to a distance from him; as if we were not with God, though it is "in him that we live and move and have our being." Whatever truth there is in the idea that God has a throne more central to his universe than earth; where he manifests himself more gloriously than he does here, or would do here were we ever so holy, or were angels to make this their abode; yet most of the effect attributed to a change of place by which we are brought nearer to the Almighty is manifestly effected by a change in ourselves. We shall be able to see and know God with as much greater readiness and distinctness compared with what we now do, as is the difference between a distant and a near view of material objects. That which in the distance is obscure becomes palpable and distinct when brought in contact with our senses. The same change, however, might be effected by an improvement in the power and perfection of our senses. Objects, the mere existence of which in the distance is now discovered with difficulty and uncertainty, would, under an increase of the power of vision, reveal to us their minutest parts, and

their most delicate texture. So when it is said "the spirit shall return to God who gave it," whatever may be its change at death as to residence or place, if spirit can be said to have either, the great change will be in its being made to open its eyes, if I may so speak, on the Divine Perfections, moral as well as natural.

The great change to be experienced then at death, is an increased vividness in our apprehension of the existence of God, accompanied necessarily with a kind of living consciousness of our personal relation to him. We find it difficult if not impossible to express this state of mind by a single term. We perceive what is out of or foreign from ourselves; we are conscious of the operations and actions of our own minds; we apprehend an idea, a proposition, a principle. This last is too vague, and does not necessarily imply actual existence. Neither the first nor the second designates the complete fact. It is not merely God without us that we are to know, but ourselves in God, and God in us. Our own mental states will be an object of as distinct cognizance as the existence and attributes of God. We shall not only be conscious of our own mental exercises, but of exercises in their living connection with Him in whom we "have our being."

An abiding conviction that there is a God is, in this life, a difficult attainment. Though none but the fool can deny his existence, it is not a conviction that has prominence in our ordinary reflections. It would be a great attainment to be as conscious that there is a supreme, spiritual Being as we are sensible that there is a sun in the heavens in a cloudless day. Though many would not be more ready to surrender their belief of his existence than they would their knowledge of the existence of that luminary, still that there is a God is a conclusion arrived at in a different manner. It is the deduction of reason, enlightened by a divine Revelation. The Bible teaches us that there is a God. What we see around us of design impresses upon us the irresistible conviction that there must be a Maker. And the events daily transpiring within our limit of observation disclose to us the operations of a moral Governor. These produce conviction when thought of and deliberately considered. But as they are the results of an intellectual process purely, they may be unnoticed or forgotten, and hence fail to exert at the time any influence upon our conduct or character. If we have rightly interpreted our text, this forgetfulness, or this want of cognizance and consciousness, will cease after death. There will probably never be a moment when we shall be unmindful of God in whom we live and move and have our being, more than we now are insensible to the warmth and light of the sun when it shines upon us in its effulgence; or, than we now are unconscious, when awake, of the ceaseless flow of thoughts and feelings which distinguish each individual from every other being in the universe. Every man has the witness within himself of his personal iden-

ity and individuality, of what is peculiar to self. He never carries within him the witness of the existence of any other being. Though the testimony borne to other beings is irresistible, it is not unceasing like that of self-existence. This distinction will probably exist in relation to finite objects in a future world. But not as to God. Him we shall know as we are known. We are now absent; we shall then be present; we shall be for ever with the Lord.

It may not be improper here to notice the fact, that he who has been renewed by divine grace does hold a more satisfactory intercourse with the Deity than we have described. There is such a fact as the fellowship of the Spirit—a sensible presence of God to the soul. This power is still faith, not vision. The believer, though filled with the Spirit, is, so long as he is at home in the body, *absent from the Lord*. It is only a foretaste, an intimation of what he is to experience in heaven. We now know in part, but then that which is in part shall be done away. We now see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. In eternity we shall perceive God, and feel the power of his presence and the divinity of his attributes and our personal relation to them, as distinctly, and perhaps more vividly than we now apprehend our own existence, or the qualities of those material objects around us which are brought in contact with our senses, which we see, and hear, and handle.

It is in this sense emphatically that the spirit may be said at death to return to God. It is to experience a change in the manner of knowing God. Imperfectly as we understand this mysterious subject, there can be no doubt that our knowledge of God will more nearly resemble intuition than in this life. Such, we believe, is the only meaning which can be given to our text. The idea is also in obvious harmony with pregnant intimations in the Word of God, if not with its explicit teaching.

That this subject may exert a practical influence, leading us to make suitable preparation for death, when our spirits shall return to God who gave them, let us consider how such a change as we have described would affect us as individuals. Were we to die soon—at any moment—would this more intimate acquaintance with God, this living, eternal *consciousness* of his presence, promote our happiness, or would it annihilate the little we have? It will produce one or the other of these effects; and as death is certain and may be sudden, we ought to consider with care and impartiality the character of our religious feelings. In this way we need not mistake. We can easily decide whether to be brought into this intimate and conscious connection with the Eternal, into the presence of God, where for no moment of our existence we can be ever unmindful of his gaze upon us, would develop that deep and holy joy which in this life the most devout feel to be pent up in the soul, struggling to break forth into an ardent flame; or whether to be

stripped of this body of sense, and to be torn from these material objects with which we are now surrounded, would be like wresting from the warrior his shield, and like sweeping away the pilgrim's "covert from the storm."

The proper question to be put, as a test, is, Do we love God?

1. It is obvious that if we love God, the more distinct are our apprehensions of his being and perfections, the greater will be our happiness, as by it an opportunity is given for the proper exercise of that affection—an affection without the exercise of which there can be no happiness. The unutterable attraction of heaven to believers is the presence of God. They love the language of the Psalmist: "In thy presence is fulness of joy." They expect to realize this; and they will realize it when the spirit that has fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ shall return to him.

The happiness of the saints in heaven will not depend simply on the fact that they are no longer to be subject to vicissitudes and disappointments—that they are to live in a world where is neither labor, nor sickness, nor death—which will make it a mansion of *rest*. It will depend chiefly on that living, holy fellowship with God, of which in this life they enjoy only a foretaste. We now hear God as he speaks to us from his throne in heaven, through his Word and his Works, and by the "still small voice" of his Spirit, speaking conviction or peace to our consciences; but then we shall see him as he is. And if we now have peace in believing; if we can say, "Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though we see him not yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," what must be the fulness and the glory of this joy when our perceptions of his holiness and love shall be those of the heavenly? What a wonderful change must the redeemed spirit experience at death! How ineffably happy, yea, glorious, must that existence be in which, let us range where we will throughout God's vast dominions, we shall be with him and shall see him as he is; shall live and act with the eyes of the understanding ever open upon the full glory of every attribute of Him whom we love with all the soul. Those who have been conscious of the love of God shed abroad in the heart in this life will not wonder at the choice of the apostle to depart and be with Christ, feeling as he did that, whilst at home in the body, he was *absent from the Lord*. Nor again at the intensity of the Psalmist's longings: "As the hart panteth for the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" He that hath such religious feelings need not fear death. The change which his spirit shall experience in that event will be his gain. It will open into his soul ten thousand streams of perfect, holy pleasure, which eternity will only increase and sweeten.

2. But if it be true that the happiness of those who love God is promoted by the change effected at death, how obvious is it that a contrary effect must be produced on a mind of an opposite religious character.

It can require but a moment's reflection to perceive that he who is merely destitute of love to God could not be happy on leaving this world. Were we to overlook the native enmity of the heart to God; were it possible that a rational spirit could be neutral in his feelings towards the Most High, but destitute of love; even in that case, it is too obvious to be misunderstood, that when the spirit shall "return to God who gave it," it must be for ever void of bliss. I appeal to the reason of every unrenewed man; to you who are conscious of this want of love to God; who find no interest in religious worship, in prayer and praise, or in silent meditation on the character and goodness of your heavenly Father; whose souls are never dissolved in view of the Divine mercies; who have no peace in believing, nor fellowship of the Spirit;—I appeal to yourselves, what would be necessary to make your eternity happy? Think over in what your chief enjoyment now consists. If it be not in the service of God, is it in any thing you can carry with you into eternity? Remember, you enter that state a spirit. While the spirit shall return to God who gave it, the body shall return to the dust whence it was taken. If you do not love God, what do you love that will be associated with the spirit, the *naked* spirit,—that will soothe it, or employ its powers, or warm into life and bliss its affections? Think of your present interest in your estates, your farms, your shops, and your merchandise; it may be in your ships and your money, the provident "insurance" of the one, and the cautious "securities" in bonds and mortgages which underlie the other. You know that those sources of happiness will be cut off at death. What the moth and the rust do not corrupt, the final flames will consume. But if they were perpetuated and could accompany you into eternity, they would avail you nothing. You return to God a *spirit*, and will have no occasion for such ministers of good.

Consider, again, how far your regard for personal appearance occupies your thoughts, and makes your existence one of interest. But you know the spirit is to be separated from the body. That shall return to the dust. Reflect, also, upon the happiness now derived from your domestic relations. To say nothing of the moral character of those relations, of the ennobling enjoyment which may be innocently derived when God is honored, yet there will be no families in eternity. That is an institution adapted to our present condition, having material bodies and temporal wants. How far heaven may be sweetened or the world of woe embittered by the recollection of associations formed on earth, I cannot say; doubtless much. But we are not to have families in eternity. We are to be as the angels of God.

Think, then, I beseech you, when all these earthly sources of pleasure shall be closed ; when you can no longer be happy in the acquisition of property, in the support and mutual affection of your friends, or in devotion to your persons ; when the pleasures of appetite and taste are no longer to be realized, what remains ? You open your eyes upward, and there is poured upon you the full blaze of the Divine glory. You cast your eager glance around on either side, and God is there, for he is every where. He fills all in all. And by his thus presenting himself to you, he says virtually, and so you understand him to say : Be ye happy in me ! But to the beauties of his character, to the attractions of his perfections, the soul is dead. There is nothing in him that you should desire him. Can you be happy ? Will not the soul be empty ? Would not the abodes even of the righteous be to you as cheerless as the solitude of the prisoner's cell ? Say, friend, conscious as you are of being in your unrenewed state destitute of love to God, could you be happy in eternity if you could hold only a neutral relation to him ? You can be happy now, because there are objects around you which you do love. You are happy in created objects. But can you think of any thing in eternity that will supply their place, if you cannot enjoy God, and such of his creatures as are in the image of God ? Does the Bible speak of any thing ? Does reason suggest any ? Come, let us reason together. Settle this question now, I beseech you,—whether you can be happy in eternity with your present feelings unless you can carry with you what you know to be impossible ? On this ground, then, alone, you cannot but perceive the necessity of a new heart and a new spirit.

But this is but a partial view of the subject. It is more serious than this. It is not sufficient to say that the sinner will find nothing in eternity to interest him ; and hence the mind will be left vacant, a mere blank. This is of too negative a character. Every thing about man as an active being, who has a soul bound to its Creator by relations of inconceivable solemnity, is positive, actual. The feelings must be elicited. Man will love or hate. Men often have feelings here which are drowned amid the confusion of this life, so that even the enemies of God are not conscious of any such state of heart. But the moment the spirit shall return to God, or, in other words, the moment it shall enter on an existence where it cannot exclude the consciousness that it is surrounded by God, that every act and thought and affection has direct and inevitable reference to him ; then will be developed what had before been unobserved, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

The more fully to illustrate this truth, let us direct our attention to two particular relations which we hold to this Omnipresent Spirit ; and which in eternity will be more appreciated than they now are.

1. There will be a lively and abiding feeling of dependence on God. In this life we often trust to our own strength, or recognize in the laws of nature certain means of support and protection, so that we may, and many do, live much of the time without any suitable feeling of dependence on the Almighty. To have this feeling of dependence every instant, to have it too very vivid, as we must have when the spirit shall return to God, will be a great change. Let such, therefore, as are sensible of their unreconciliation to God, consider how it will affect their happiness. You are to have a lively apprehension of an entire dependence, at every moment, for ever, on one whom you do not love; yea, more, with whose moral attributes you have no fellowship; to whom and to whose moral government you feel a fixed and inherent opposition; and who, you are sensible at this very moment of your dependence on Him, is treating you as a rebel against his government and as a despiser of his mercy. Could you, friend, be happy in a state of dependence on a fellow-being, between whom and yourself there exist such feelings of estrangement? Fancy yourself the dependent inmate of one towards whom you have feelings of uncontrollable aversion, and who, you know, has feelings of just resentment at the wrongs you have committed against him and his household; conceive yourself, for the limited space of fifty or even twenty years, sheltered and clothed by him, sitting daily at his table, under the silent rebuke of his eye, in every glance of which you cannot but read his just estimate of your baseness and guilt. Could you endure this? Would not darkness and oblivion be a boon? Would you not prefer death? But your relation to God, in the world of spirits, must be inconceivably more intimate. Wherever you move, every act, and every exercise of each faculty will only remind you of Him who keeps you in being. You will feel your very existence to be drawn out every moment from Him in whom is life, but to whom you are unreconciled. Can you be happy?

2. Besides this feeling of dependence, we shall also have an acute sense in eternity of the claims of the Divine law upon us as we do not in this life. God says, Be ye holy, for I am holy. We now know this to be his requirement, but we do not appreciate it; and we do not feel the force of the law resting on the conscience. The chief reason is, we have not an abiding sense of God's presence, accompanied with a clear view of his perfections. In eternity, the apprehension of the claims of the law of God will be precisely those of our perception of his existence and attributes, since his law is a transcript of his moral character. Here we can sin; and because God keeps silence, we feel no restraint upon us. There is little or no compunction of conscience; so indistinct often is the impression on the mind that there is a God, at least that he is a holy God. But it will not be so in eternity. Every thought and volition will be seen to have in it

moral character ; and the mind will instinctively refer its actions to the moral standard. If what we have said before be in substance true, the perfections of Jehovah will so blaze out upon the intelligent powers of the soul, that not to make this comparison will be impossible. Were a voice from heaven repeating, in the solemn accents of Divinity, the commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, it would not in all probability produce an impression so deep or so vivid as will be experienced in eternity by the secret living consciousness of the soul that "the law is spiritual." Could you be happy on earth with this claim, thus forcibly addressed to you ? Is not the quiet of conscience now experienced, much of it at least, the result of forgetfulness—because you do not consider ? Have you never experienced any uneasiness as you have felt this requirement urged upon you ? Have you not felt it to be a demand which you had no heart to answer ? Though sensible that it is right that you should be required to love God, and to love him supremely ; still, have you never been sensible at the same time that it was painful to acknowledge the claim ? Has it not been the conviction of the understanding and conscience triumphing for the moment over a reluctant heart ? But can you enter eternity, where this claim will never be forgotten, nor its justice doubted, but from the living remembrance of which and the acknowledged justice of it the heart revolts ? Where you shall feel the claim of God upon your affections, and yet not an emotion of love be awokened, but the opposite ? It shall only call into livelier action the secret hostility of the heart to such a being as God is, and to such a government as his. Can you, can any person, endure an endless existence like this ? Are you aware that such must be your condition, if you die unreconciled to God ? To say nothing of that punishment which God may inflict on you directly as the desert of your sins—or of the remorse which you must inevitably experience at the recollection of past offenses, as it shall be suggested to the conscience of the different periods onwards in eternity : Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime wast guilty of this or that transgression, didst omit this or the other duty, or didst, on occasions which can never be forgotten, treat lightly the Divine mercies—to say nothing of your now, by a life of impiety, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath ; can you as you are, unreconciled to God, venture into his holy presence ? You are now conscious of shrinking even from the *remote* intercourse which the worship of him on earth requires ; can you endure to be for ever *with him* ?

Under these views death is a solemn event. It fixes character. He that is holy will be holy still. He that is unholy will be unholy still. He that is holy will love God, for he is holy. And the more intimate the intercourse, the more fully will this affection be developed. The more God is seen and known,

and his goodness enjoyed, the deeper will be the well of love opened in the soul. And this will constitute an essential part of the Christian's heaven. But let it never be forgotten, that opposite emotions must be excited in the mind of one who does not love God. If the heart be alienated from him, the more God is known, the stronger will this alienation become. This must lay the foundation of the sinner's future suffering, and constitute no unimportant part of it. It is impossible, where a spirit of blasphemy has not already taken possession of the heart, properly to estimate such a condition.

The inference that, to be happy in the presence of God, *the heart must be changed*, is so obvious, that further confirmation is unnecessary. How important that a fountain of holy love be opened in the soul before death; as that fixes character. After death comes the judgment. As the tree falls, so it lies. Ye must be born again. Nothing will avail but a "new creature." And all this must be experienced before death. And as death is often sudden and unexpected, why delay? why not seek a new heart now? why not this instant offer the prayer, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"?

O inquiring friend, what rich grace is seen in the *way of life!* You perceive your need of an essential change in your feelings towards God. You are doubtless convinced that nothing can effect this but the energy of the Divine Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the heart. But do you duly consider that God cannot, consistently with his character and the justice of his government, enter, by his Holy Spirit, your estranged and defiled heart, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ? If we who were enemies are reconciled to God, it is by the death of his Son. Not only, therefore, ought we to lift up adoring hearts to our heavenly Father for his unspeakable gift, but to seek in prayer and by faith in Christ the aid of the Spirit. This is the richest fruit of his death. You can hardly be so ignorant of the nature of sin as to view yourself entitled to this spiritual aid. You are more liable to deem your wretched condition a plea,—a reason for its bestowment. It was the reason why the Son of God died. But had our peril and wretchedness been a ground for sending the Spirit, the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son would have been spared. Sensible therefore alike of your guilt and your helplessness, come as near to God as you now can by faith—come by the new and living way, which is ever open—come by the blood of Christ. Be assured of his willingness to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. But be also assured that he will grant this mercy only for Christ's sake. Then with his redeemed ones you shall in this life joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement; and when your spirits shall return to God, living in the likeness of God, your joy shall be full.